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Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 May 2016, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Jürgenson (Vice-President) ..... (Estonia)

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In the absence of Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea), Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8: Integration segment (*continued*)

Discussion on "Leaving no one behind: National perspectives on policymaking" (panel 1)

1. **The President** said that the panel discussion, entitled "Institutional frameworks and policy planning" would address the institutional and governance frameworks necessary for the effective integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development with a view to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The panel would also consider how policy innovation and integration could inform national strategic frameworks and policy planning in order to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

2. **Mr. Donoghue** (Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and co-facilitator of the Post-2015 Development Agenda), moderator, said that discussions at various levels were continuing about how to implement the recently adopted 2030 Agenda, including the structures needed for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, and that the holding of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2016 would help to drive that momentum forward.

3. While the 2030 Agenda had set out broad guidelines on follow-up and review, many questions related to implementation remained unanswered. During the next phase it would therefore be necessary to decide, inter alia: which systems should be put in place at the United Nations; what organs should be restructured; how delivery efforts would be funded at the multilateral level; what could be done at the regional level; what individual Member States should do both domestically and externally to play their role in the universal agenda; and how the full range of stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and the scientific community, could be engaged in that process.

4. The report by the Secretary-General, entitled "Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level" (A/70/684), was an important contribution to that ongoing debate and he commended the Ambassadors of Denmark and Belize for their effective work as co-facilitators for the process to take decisions on the most critical issues addressed in the report.

5. The integration segment provided a welcome opportunity to look at implementation in a holistic manner through a series of panel discussion focusing on key areas. His own country, Ireland, was currently considering the institutional frameworks and policies that it would need in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. He looked forward to learning from the national voluntary presentations of other countries at the forthcoming high-level political forum.

6. All countries would clearly need to elaborate transparent and inclusive processes which ensured that every voice was heard and which fostered awareness and ownership of the 2030 Agenda among ordinary citizens. Parliamentary engagement would be an important component in that regard. Furthermore, the national systems in place must work actively to break down silos and recognize that policy impacts in one area, such as agriculture, could have adverse impacts on others, such as the environment. Other important dimensions, such as human rights and gender equality, must also be addressed holistically.

7. Lastly, he recalled that the guiding questions for the discussion were as follows: how current institutional arrangements could be adapted to promote integrated policy and decision-making, and what the possible incentives might be for doing so; how institutional arrangements could effectively incorporate existing and new knowledge, and be translated into policy solutions to reduce poverty and advance sustainable development; what the challenges were to policy integration and how those might be addressed; how the benefits and trade-offs could be assessed ex-ante to inform policy choices, and ex-post to inform implementation; and what concrete tools could be used for that purpose.

8. **Mr. Cardona** (Sectorial Minister for Social Development and Inclusion of Honduras), panellist, said that the past two years had been very difficult for Honduras owing to the combined impact of climate change, the El Niño phenomenon and unprecedented droughts throughout the country. In response, the Government had issued emergency provisions and assistance to areas where crops had been completely

destroyed and was also promoting programmes for the sustainable development of agriculture. Furthermore, to address the overall situation, the Government was implementing State policies to reduce extreme poverty and improve the quality of life, to ensure the sustainable use of land and water, and to finance micro, small and medium-sized producers.

9. His Government had horizontally linked the priorities of the Country Vision and National Plan 2010-2038, the Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and the Sustainable Development Goals, with responsibility for the latter being shared among the various government offices dealing with social and economic development, decentralization and infrastructure. Moreover, to ensure that no one was left behind, a plan had been drawn up for the implementation of the Goals in each of the country's six regions.

10. The challenge ahead would be for every country to similarly transform the Sustainable Development Goals into national policies. The implementation and follow-up of the Goals could be facilitated by their incorporation into the educational curricula of all countries.

11. **Mr. Dang** Huy Dong (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment of Viet Nam), panellist, said that all nations faced opportunities and challenges in the context of promoting new integration and innovation policies for the 2030 Agenda. His Government, for example, was preparing a master plan that would localize the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the Socioeconomic Development Plan 2016-2020, and in which the corporate sector would have an important role to play.

12. Historically, the Vietnamese centrally planned economy had relied strongly on State-owned enterprises. However, as a result of the reforms implemented over the past 30 years, their share of the economy had declined. At the same time, increased foreign and local investment had led to the rapid development of the private sector, which now accounted for over 70 per cent of the gross domestic product of Viet Nam. The policy of privatizing and reforming State-owned enterprises had thus proven to be extremely effective by creating additional jobs. The funds raised from such privatization initiatives, amounting to around $3 billion, had been redistributed by the Government to social sectors, including the education and health sectors. In that context, he recalled that legislation on enterprises in Viet Nam had also recently been amended to promote the development of social enterprises.

13. As part of its ongoing poverty reduction efforts, the Government was encouraging crowdfunding platforms for community development. Each community webpage was not only sponsored by a lead donor but also provided an opportunity for an interactive dialogue between individual donors and recipients.

14. Lastly, he noted that the Government had established a social safety net policy and a contingency policy to meet the population's emergency needs.

15. **Mr. Alter** (Director of the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Secretariat), panellist, said that good governance remained relevant for good policy performance and that both were dependent upon reliable data, transparency, accountability, the rule of law and integrity.

16. However, in addition to building on those achievements, there was a need for institutional innovation. For example, the centres of Government in many countries were underperforming in terms of their coordination and monitoring of implementation. In the future, those centres would need to mainstream policies on the Sustainable Development Goals into their decision-making. Other crucial factors required for innovation included actors with leadership and vision, as well as data-based knowledge for making policy decisions. At the same time, it was important to have independent institutions in place that could provide Governments with credible, competent and valuable assessments.

17. Most countries no longer enjoyed the full trust of their citizens. However, trust was essential as a measure of Government performance and for the success of reform policies. In the final analysis, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals must take such factors into account given that, in the words of Machiavelli, there was nothing more difficult than an attempt to introduce a new order of things.

18. **Ms. Persson** (Senior Research Fellow and leader of the global research theme "Transforming Governance", Stockholm Environment Institute), panellist, said that she represented a vibrant research

community that could be a valuable resource for policy integration inputs to Agenda 2030.

19. She noted that for policy integration to be effective it was necessary to evaluate past successes and failures; to achieve consistent policy outputs through the use of downstream tools, and to proactively identify synergies through the use of upstream tools; and to employ broader institutional arrangements for policy integration while simultaneously identifying specific opportunities for integrated policy outcomes.

20. Across all countries and cultures, political will and leadership were crucial for the adaptation of institutional arrangements to promote effective integration. While institutional arrangements could provide the necessary infrastructure for policy integration, they were insufficient to bring about integrated outcomes and it was ultimately political leadership that acted as the catalyst.

21. Policy integration could be institutionalized in public administration. However that was more than an administrative or technocratic task alone, as sometimes tough choices needed to be made that required value judgments and political accountability. Another consideration was that the adaptation of institutional arrangements could be a lengthy process, given the need for continuous re-evaluation. Unsuccessful policy integration could even result in policy dilution. For all those reasons, in implementing the 2030 Agenda, it would be important to remain self-critical and to learn from past mistakes.

22. Academic research typically analysed four dimensions of institutional arrangements: normative frameworks and political leadership; organizational changes in government administration; procedural tools, from the initial stage of policymaking to the implementation and enforcement phases; and cognitive efforts to facilitate learning over time. While some of the relevant downstream tools were already in place as safeguards against inconsistent policy outcomes, more upstream approaches would be needed to proactively identify the synergies in the 2030 Agenda. Countries would also need more practical and specific solutions to address their remaining policy inconsistencies.

23. **Mr. Radon** (Adjunct Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University), panellist, said that policy innovation entailed not just the introduction of new ideas but also the sharing of ideas and of lessons learned about what approaches worked or did not work. Moreover, policymakers, who were often distanced from the actual impact of their decisions, must ensure that the voices of all those affected were heard. There were tools available to achieve that end but some of them, such as environmental impact assessments, needed refinement. For example, the assessment prepared prior to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the process by which it had been approved had been flawed in a number of ways. Environmental impact assessments should be widely disseminated so as to provide local communities with an opportunity to say how they would be affected by a given project and a benchmark against which they could hold companies to account for fulfilling their commitments. A similar process should be used to assess the likely impact of international investment agreements. All such assessment mechanisms should be backed up by a robust legal framework.

24. In efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it was important to ensure equality of expertise around the world by, inter alia, using technology to share knowledge and data. Communication should take place not just among professions and ministries within one country but also among different countries and regions.

25. **Ms. Jung** Eun-hye (Republic of Korea) said that, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, cooperation and integration among the institutions that actually implemented them must also be sustainable. The role of governments was to construct an institutional framework for gathering ideas from both the public and private sectors and putting them into practice. Each country should also have a national strategy for achieving the Goals; her Government had adopted such a strategy to guide the country's policies for the next 20 years. Furthermore, a national committee on sustainable development within the Office of the Prime Minister was coordinating the efforts of the various ministries and agencies involved in implementing the Goals.

26. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana) said that policy integration, which was one of the key dimensions of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, required vision and a willingness to act, and also structures that were flexible enough to evolve over time. He would welcome the panel's views on the risks associated with policy integration, such as policy

dilution and the potential for confusion over the allocation of responsibilities. His Government was in the process of developing a strategy for the achievement of the Goals and was pursuing a green agenda. It was also working on the establishment of development hubs in each of the country's 10 administrative regions with a view to bridging the divide between the coast and the hinterland, ensuring that services reached scattered populations and connecting all communities to the national development effort.

27. **Mr. Fowlie** (International Telecommunication Union) said that technology needed to be harnessed for the purposes of sustainable development but was too often siloed from policy and the private sector. The *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends* contained statistics showing that a country's gross domestic product (GDP) could be boosted by increased Internet coverage, but only if policy and technology were integrated, for example through the privatization of Internet service providers and the adoption of government policies to build capacity and technical expertise in digital technology. It was also imperative to apply the "dig once" principle, whereby pipes for Internet cables were laid at the same time as other hard infrastructure was built. Policies to promote market competition and public-private partnerships would also help to integrate technology into the development process.

28. **Ms. Persson** (Senior Research Fellow and leader of the global research theme "Transforming Governance", Stockholm Environment Institute), responding to the comments made by the representative of Guyana, said that policy integration must be effected properly and in a democratic way, taking account of the different priorities of different stakeholders with a view to avoiding conflict. Controls and checks should be enforced, and good use should be made of downstream integration tools such as environmental impact assessments.

29. With regard to the risk of diffusion of responsibility, she said that in Sweden the Government had identified 16 national environmental objectives and had delegated them to different sectoral authorities for implementation. That approach had worked well but had incurred high transaction costs.

30. **Mr. Cardona** (Sectorial Minister for Social Development and Inclusion of Honduras) said that, under his Government's communications policy, some 80 per cent of the country's schools had been equipped with broadband Internet connections by 2014, and public parks had been provided with Wi-Fi coverage. Those results had been achieved through public-private partnerships, which could also be harnessed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. **Mr. Dang** Huy Dong (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment of Viet Nam) said that information technology was an important tool for increasing transparency in policy implementation and could help reduce the cost of checks and balances. In Viet Nam, an e-government system was being established, which allowed for quick and easy online registration of companies. A public procurement portal had also been set up, which was helping to increase transparency in the procurement process.

32. **Mr. Alter** (Director of the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Secretariat) said that policy integration had both upside and downside risks, the costs and benefits of which should be properly evaluated. All decisions should be evidence-based. Integration would require increased investment of time and resources, while the important process of ensuring that all voices were heard could slow down implementation. On the other hand, the risks of policy dilution could be reduced if the decision-making process was front-loaded. That meant conducting evaluations at an early stage of the policy cycle so as to learn from both successes and failures and avoid mistakes in future cycles.

33. The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Quito in October 2016, was an opportunity to ensure that integration was a key consideration in the building of communities and cities for the next 20 years. The focus should be not only on buildings and infrastructure but also on how economies and societies would function in the future. Long-term impacts should be evaluated upfront.

34. **Mr. Radon** (Adjunct Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University) said that the Sustainable Development Goals were complex; a team effort was required in order to implement them successfully. The role of governments was to create an enabling environment through the adoption of appropriate laws and policies. Risks could never be

eliminated completely, but they needed to be properly managed. As previously mentioned, ideas should be shared and all voices should be heard so as to give people a greater sense of ownership of processes that affected them.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.